

**The 100,000 Attorneys: The National Domestic  
Violence Volunteer Attorney Network Act**

Domestic violence remains a reality for one out of four women in our country. Experts agree a key to ending domestic violence is meaningful access to the justice system. Often stopping the violence hinges on a victim's ability to obtain effective protection orders, initiate separation proceedings or design safe child custody. Yet thousands of victims of domestic violence go without representation every day in this country. At best, less than 1 out of 5 low-income victims ever see a lawyer.

There is a wealth of untapped resources in this country - lawyers who want to volunteer. Senator Biden's National Domestic Violence Volunteer Act would harness the skills, enthusiasm and dedication of these lawyers and infuse 100,000 new volunteer lawyers into the justice system to represent domestic violence victims. To enlist, train and place lawyers, the Act creates a new, electronic National Domestic Violence Attorney Network and Referral Project.

There are five components of the bill:

***(1) Creates a National Domestic Violence Volunteer Attorney Network Referral Project to be managed by the American Bar Association Commission on Domestic Violence.***

With \$2 million of new federal funding each year, the American Bar Association Commission on Domestic Violence will solicit for volunteer lawyers and then create and maintain an electronic network. It will provide appropriate mentoring, training and technical assistance to volunteer lawyers. And it will establish and maintain a point of contact in each state – a statewide legal coordinator – to help match willing lawyers to victims.

***(2) Enlists the National Domestic Violence Hotline and Internet sources to provide legal referrals.***

The bill will authorize \$500,000 of new federal spending to the National Domestic Violence Hotline to update their system and train advocates on how to provide legal referrals to callers in coordination with the American Bar Association Commission on Domestic Violence. Legal referrals may also be done by qualified Internet-based services.

***(3) Creates a Pilot Program and National Rollout of National Domestic Violence Volunteer Attorney Network and Referral Project.***

The bill designs a pilot program to implement the volunteer attorney network in five diverse states with \$750,000 grants. The Office on Violence Against Women in the Department of Justice will administer these monies to qualified statewide legal coordinators to help them connect with the ABA Commission on Domestic Violence, the National Domestic Violence Hotline, and the volunteer lawyers.

After a successful stint in five states, the bill will rollout the program nationally with annual appropriations of \$8 million each year.

***(4) Establishes a Domestic Violence Legal Advisory Task Force.***

***(5) Mandates the Government Accounting Office to study each state and assess the scope and quality of legal services available to battered women and report back to Congress within a year.***

An excellent roundtable of groups reviewed and contributed to this legislation, including the National Network to End Domestic Violence, the Legal Resource Center for Violence Against Women, the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, the American Bar Association, WomensLaw.org, the National Domestic Violence Hotline, the Legal Services Corporation, the American Prosecutors Research Institute, National Legal Aid and Defenders Association, National Center for State Courts, National Association for Attorneys General, Battered Women's Justice Project, National Association of Women Judges, National Association of Women Lawyers, National Crime Victim Bar Association and National Center for the Victims of Crime.